

The Institute of Acoustics' response to the Department for Communities and Local Government Consultation on Review of Planning Practice Guidance

1. **Do you agree with the proposed recommendations for a much reduced set of essential practice guidance in the format recommended? (Recommendations 1, 2, 3, 5, 6) – Yes.** In regard to noise and vibration there is a need to develop appropriate guidance on the relevant sources of advice and their interpretation; and to ensure that this is broadly acceptable to all stakeholders. Whilst the Institute of Acoustics would be happy to assist in developing such guidance in conjunction with other stakeholders, we regard it as essential that Government should lead this exercise and endorse the outcome.

2. **Do you agree that standards for future Government Planning Practice Guidance should be implemented by the Chief Planner in DCLG, but with decisions on what to include within guidance still taken by Ministers? (Recommendation 4) - No comment.**

3. **While access to all planning guidance online will be free of charge, do you think it would be appropriate to offer planning professionals an additional service involving immediate notification of every revision to the guidance, and to make a small charge for this service? (Recommendation 6) No comment.**

4. **Do you agree that the new web based resource should be clearly identified as the unique source of Government Planning Practice Guidance? (Recommendations 7-9) Yes.** However, with regard to recommendation 9, we are concerned that if the Government only signposts organisations providing best practice guidance and other advice in relevant areas, but does not endorse specific documents, it will not be of any real benefit. The IOA is also concerned that a failure to provide a suitable steer as to which noise and vibration guidance the Government regards as best practice for particular circumstances, may encourage greater confusion, delay and disruption to the planning process.

5. **Do you agree with the recommended timescales for cancellation of guidance and new/revised guidance being put in place? (Recommendations 10-13) The proposed timetable for producing the required further policy guidance on noise, vibration and tranquility appears to be very challenging given the lack of policy detail in the NPPF and the difficulty of separating the technical and policy content contained in PPG24. We note that the NPPF contains welcome new policies on the protection of areas of tranquility and that this is a policy area that is not addressed in any current planning policy documents.**

6. **Do you agree with the recommendations for cancellation of existing guidance documents? Are there specific, essential elements of current guidance material that should in your view be retained and considered for inclusion in the revised guidance set? (Recommendations 14 - 16)** As part of the preparation of any new planning guidance on noise we agree that it is essential that vital policies contained in the now withdrawn PPG24 are reviewed, and rescued where appropriate, so that a clear government steer can be given as to which of the many policies contained in PPG24 are considered relevant to the new National Planning Policy Framework. If this isn't done then there is a likelihood that local interpretation and policy development will result in inconsistent consideration of noise, vibration and tranquility issues, and introduce further confusion and delays into the handling of noise, vibration and tranquility within the planning process.

7. **Do you agree with the recommended priority list for new/revised guidance? (Recommendations 17-18)** - Yes, and we are pleased to see noise included in the list of policy areas where a gap has been recognised in recommendation 17, and referred for closing in Appendix D.

8. **Are there any further points you would like to make in response to the Review Group's Report? Do you have additional ideas to improve and/or streamline planning practice guidance?** Subject to appropriate safeguards on resource expenditure and/or government support, the IOA would be happy to assist with the development of suitably improved and streamlined planning practice in regard to enhancement and encouragement of the positive aspects of sound e.g. quiet areas, and the appropriate control and mitigation of the negative aspects of noise and vibration e.g. noise sensitive and noise generating development.

Steve Mitchell

Chairman of the Institute of Acoustics' Environmental Noise Group

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